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INSURRECTIONS

By JAMES STEPHENS







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BY JAMES STEPHENS

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THESE

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CONTENTS

	PAGE
THE DANCER	7
THE STREET BEHIND YOURS	8
NATURE	11
WHAT TOMAS AN BUILE SAID IN A PUB	15
CHILL OF THE EVE	16
THE WHISPERER	18
THE RED-HAIRED MAN'S WIFE	21
THE TALE OF MAD BRIGID	24
HATE	25
THE WATCHER	26
THE SEEKER	28
FIFTY POUNDS A YEAR AND A PENSION	30
TO THE FOUR COURTS, PLEASE	33
TEIG GORABH AND THE LIAR	34
FOSSILS	36
THE SHELL	38
WHAT THE TRAMP SAID	40
A STREET	41
OPTIMIST	42
WHERE THE DEMONS GRIN	44
SEUMAS BEG	46
THE REBEL	47
OULD SNARLY GOB	50
HOW TO WOO	51
WINDY CORNER	54
SLAN LEATH	55

*What's the use
Of my abuse ?
The world will run
Around the sun
As it has done
Since time begun,
When I have drifted to the deuce ;
And what's the use
Of my abuse ?*

THE DANCER

I WILL not dance :

I say I will not dance.

Your audience, pah, let them go home again,
Sleek, ugly pigs. Am I to hop and prance

As long as they will pay,

And posture for their eyes, and lay

My womanhood before them ? Let them drain
Their porter pots and snuffle—I'll not stay.

For he is dead :

I tell you he is dead.

My God, did you not hear me say it
Twice already ? I held his groaning head

In these remembering arms,

And cursed the charms

That could not stop his going. Must I bay it
Like a dog to you ? Quit your alarms !

They shout and stamp ?

Then, let them shout and stamp,

Those booted hogs and lechers—I'm away
To sit beside my dead. O God, you tramp

Upon me too, and twine

More sorrows round me than are mine

With holy unconcern. . . . Don't bar my way,
I'm going to my dead . . . Ah-li-h, stamping swine !

THE STREET BEHIND YOURS

THE night droops down upon the street
Shade after shade. A solemn frown

Is pressing to
A deeper hue

The houses drab and brown,
Till each in blackness touch and meet,
Are mixed and melted down.

All is so silent. Not a sound
Comes through the dark. The gas-lamps show
From here and there

In feeble glare

The pavement cracked below,
And the greasy, muddy ground,
And the houses in a row.

Those rigid houses: black and sour.
Each dark, thin building stretching high.

Rank after rank

Of windows blank

Stare from a sullen eye,
With doleful aspect scowl and glower
At the timid passer-by.

And down between those spectre files,
The narrow roadway, thick with mud,

Doth crouch and hide,'
While close beside
The gutter churns a flood
Of noisome water through the piles
Of garbage thick as blood.

And tho' 'tis silent, tho' no sound
Crawls from the blackness thickly spread,
Yet darkness brings
Grim, noiseless things
That walk as they were dead.
They glide, and peer, and steal around,
With stealthy, silent tread.

You dare not walk; that awful crew
Might speak or laugh as you pass by,
Might touch and paw
With a formless claw,
Or leer from a sodden eye,
Might whisper awful things they knew,
Or wring their hands and cry.

See, in the doorway, squatting there
Back in the blackness, rocking slow—
That a babe can rest
On the battered breast
She urges to and fro,
She croons no song, she prays no prayer,
If any such she know.

She rocks and looks with a fixèd eye
Out from the black cave where she sits
 Silent as stone,
 Nor makes a moan
To the silent hour that flits,
Nor droops one dreary, heart-wrung sigh,
But stares through hell-dark pits.

Heaven send she has no thoughts to sear
Through the drear stretches of the night,
 Sweetness of smiles,
 And childish wiles,
A future beckoning bright,
When the hands of a man held nought of fear
And the lips on her lips were light.

There is the doorway mean and low,
And there are the houses drab and brown,
 And the night's black pall,
 And the hours that crawl,
And the forms that peer and frown,
And the lamp's dim flare on the slush below,
And the gutter grumbling down.

NATURE

Not altogether cruel I,
Who weave the sunbeams through the air,
I paint the many-tinted sky
And curl a baby's hair.

I teach the field mouse how to gnaw,
I tell the wind what song to sing,
I form the alligator's jaw,
And give the bee its sting.

I mould the beak of hawk and crow,
I roll the ocean in its cup,
I show the grass the way to grow,
And bid the oak-tree up.

The brain that made the kindly teat
At which the lion's whelp has hung,
The fount of kine has made as fit
For comfort of their young.

And if the lion's paw be strong,
Or tooth of tiger fierce to grind,
The antelope can leap along
Leaving their strength behind.

And from my varied storehouse I
Antagonisms still must draw ;
I make the spider and the fly
And tell to each the law.

For one I weave a web to snare
And fashion limbs to clutch and slay ;
The other's wings can 'scape the lair
And seek afield its prey.

Ye moan that all your lives ye work,
Spending yourselves for petty doles ;
That charity dare scarcely lurk
Within your hungry souls ;

That in the frenzied fight for food
Ye dare not do a kindly deed ;
That I say harsh ye must be lewd,
And live and die by greed.

Ye curse me sore, and say I give
And take away what thing I gave ;
Ye cry that ere ye've learned to live
Your feet are in the grave.

I nothing give ; myself I lend
To each one till his day is o'er ;
Then take again my loan, and spend
It through another door.

Still everything in balance true
Works on the lines primeval set,
The rabbit to the lion grew,
And man is growing yet.

For all ye do ye do to scale
By plan made ere your clay was new ;
And even when ye seem to fail,
I know the work is true.

Your love and hate, your peace and strife,
The little charities ye prize,
All further on the trend of life,
And help ye still to rise.

Be sure the life next on the rung
Will hold your sense in small repute,
And wonder could its wit have sprung
From such a foolish root.

And after them the long array
Will live and die in peace or strife,
Will laud the wisdom of their day,
And rail at me and life.

Of life and death ye sadly rave,
Tho' life and death are but the one,
For life is life e'en in the grave,
And death is life in pawn.

The why and wherefore, whence and where,
Are hid to you, are hid to me,
All blindly we ascend the stair
And bend the humble knee.

I sweat in labour just like man ;
What thing I do I blindly do
Obediently to higher plan,
I kiss the rod with you.

And I and Death and Time and You,
Will work together till the end
Has justified the work we do,
And nothing's left to mend.

Then life will be alive, and Time
Will mould you to your final shape,
And God will show you how to climb
To heaven through the ape.

WHAT TOMAS AN BUILE SAID IN A PUB

I SAW GOD. Do you doubt it ?

Do you dare to doubt it ?

I saw the Almighty Man. His hand
Was resting on a mountain, and
He looked upon the World and all about it :
I saw him plainer than you see me now,
You mustn't doubt it.

He was not satisfied ;

His look was all dissatisfied.

His beard swung on a wind far out of sight
Behind the world's curve, and there was light
Most fearful from His forehead, and He sighed,
"That star went always wrong, and from the start
I was dissatisfied."

He listed up His hand—

I say He heaved a dreadful hand
Over the spinning Earth, then I said, "Stay,
You must not strike it, God ; I'm in the way ;
And I will never move from where I stand."

He said, "Dear child, I feared that you were dead,"
And stayed His hand.

CHILL OF THE EVE

A long, green swell
Slopes soft to the sea,
And a far-off bell
Swings sweet to me,
As the grey, chill day
Slips away from the lea.

Spread cold and far,
Without one glow
From a mild, pale star,
Is the sky's steel bow,
And the grey, chill day
Slips away below.

That green tree grieves
To the air around,
And the whispering leaves
Have a lonely sound,
As the grey, chill day
Slips away from the ground.

The long grass bends
With a rippling rush
To the soft, white ends
Where the roots are lush,
And the grey, chill day
Slips away in a hush.

Down by the shore
The slow waves twine
From the rock-strewn floor
To the shell-edged line,
And the grey, chill day
Slips away with a whine.

And dark, more dark,
The shades settle down,
Far off is a spark
From the lamp-lit town,
And the grey, chill day
Slips away with a frown.

THE WHISPERER

THE moon was round,
And as I walked along
There was no sound,
Save where the wind with long
Low hushes whispered to the ground
A snatch of song.

No thought had I
Save that the moon was fair,
And fair the sky,
And God was everywhere.
I chanted as the wind went by
A poet's prayer.

Then came a voice—
“ Why is it that you praise
And thus rejoice,
O stranger to the ways
Of Providence? God has no choice
In this sad maze.

“ His law He laid
Down at the dread beginning,
When He made
The world and set it spinning,
And His casual hand betrayed
Us into sinning.

‘ I fashion you,
And then for weal or woe,
My business through,
I care not how ye go,
Or struggle, win or lose, nor do
I want to know.

‘ Is no appeal,
For I am far from sight,
And cannot feel
The rigour of your plight ;
And if ye faint just when ye kneel,
That, too, is right.’

“ Then do not sing,
O poet in the night,
That everything
Is beautiful and right.
What if some wind come now and fling
At thee in spite ?”

All in amaze
I listened to the tone
Mocking my praise :
And then I heard the groan
That old tormented nature did upraise
From tree and stone.

And as I went
I heard it once again,
That harsh lament:
And fire came to my brain;
Deep anger unto me was lent
To write this strain.

THE RED-HAIRED MAN'S WIFE

I HAVE taken that vow—

And you were my friend

But yesterday—now

All that's at an end,

And you are my husband, and claim me, and I
must depend.

Yesterday I was free,

Now you, as I stand, . . .

Walk over to me

And take hold of my hand.

You look at my lips, your eyes are too bold,
your smile is too bland.

My old name is lost,

My distinction of race :

Now the line has been crossed,

Must I step to your pace ?

Must I walk as you list, and obey, and smile up
in your face ?

All the white and the red

Of my cheeks you have won ;

All the hair of my head,

And my feet, tho' they run,

Are yours, and you own me and end me just as
I begun.

Must I bow when you speak,
Be silent and hear,
Inclining my cheek
And incredulous ear
To your voice, and command, and behest, hold
your lightest wish dear?

I am woman, but still
Am alive, and can feel
Every intimate thrill
That is woe or is weal.
I, aloof, and divided, apart, standing far, can I
kneel?

O, if kneeling were right,
I should kneel nor be sad,
And abase in your sight
All the pride that I had,
I should come to you, hold to you, cling to you,
call to you, glad.

If not, I shall know,
I shall surely find out,
And your world will throw
In disaster and rout;
I am woman and glory and beauty, I mystery,
terror, and doubt.

I am separate still,
I am I and not you :
And my mind and my will,
As in secret they grew,
Still are secret, unreached and untouched and
not subject to you.

THE TALE OF MAD BRIGID

AND then

There rung a bell out of the evening air:

One big star fell

In a long golden flare through a great stillness,
And he was standing there.

There came a chillness creeping through me slow,

Nor could I know that it was truly he

Who stood beside, when, lo,

He smiled, and I was made to know,

Nor hesitate because of his grave kingliness and
state,

And steady eyes and brows immaculate.

But then the weight

Of his too sudden glory bowed me down

Slow to the ground.

I feared that he might frown without a sound,
Or speak in fire.

Then he said "sweet," and I was dumb;

I dared not come because of my desire;

And he went slow away.

And from the grey, cold evening came the tweet,

Sad to my heart, but infinitely sweet,

Of some late flying wren.

HATE

My enemy came nigh,

And I

Stared fiercely in his face.

My lips went writhing back in a grimace,

And stern I watched him with a narrow eye.

Then, as I turned away, my enemy,

That bitter heart and savage, said to me :

“ Some day, when this is past,

When all the arrows that we have are cast,

We may ask one another why we hate,

And fail to find a story to relate.

It may seem to us then a mystery

That we could hate each other.”

Thus said he,

And did not turn away,

Waiting to hear what I might have to say,

But I fled quickly, fearing if I stayed

I might have kissed him as I would a maid.

THE WATCHER

A rose for a young head,
A ring for a bride,
Joy for the homestead
Clean and wide—

Who's that waiting
In the rain outside ?

A heart for an old friend,
A hand for the new :
Love can to earth lend
Heaven's hue—

Who's that standing
In the silver dew ?

A smile for the parting,
A tear as they go,
God's sweethearting
Ends just so—

Who's that watching
Where the black winds blow ?

He who is waiting
In the rain outside,
He who is standing
Where the dew drops wide,
He who is watching
In the wind must ride
(Tho' the pale hands cling)
With the rose
And the ring
And the bride,
 Must ride
With the red of the rose,
And the gold of the ring,
And the lips and the hair of the bride.

THE SEEKER

I SAT me down and looked around
The little lamp-lit room, and saw
Where many pictures gloomed and frowned
In sad, still life, nor made a sound—
A many for one to draw:
 Shadow and sea and ground
 Held by the artist's law,
 Beauty without a flaw,
 All with a sense profound.

One teeming brain was wood and hill,
And sloping pastures wide and green,
And cool, deep seas where rivers spill
The snows of mountains far and chill,
Sad pools where the shadows lean.
 Old trees that hang so still.
 Fields which the reapers glean.
 Plains where the wind is keen.
 Each with a nerve to thrill.

Elusive figures swayed and yearned
By lake and misty greenwood dim,
Seeking in sorrow: they had learned
In one night's dream might be discerned,
A pace from the world's rim,

Wages their woe had earned,
Rest from the labour grim,
God and the peace of Him—
These in a frame interned.

· · · · ·

On through the forest, one step on,
One step, O Powers, let me attain
This hard, dead step, let me be gone
Back where I and the morning shone,
Back ere the dream shall wane
When I and a star were one.
Seen through the veils of pain
Glory shall shine again :
God, has the vision gone ?

FIFTY POUNDS A YEAR AND A PENSION

I CAN never see the sun walk in the dawn
On a lawn
Where the lark sang mad with rapture as he came
Robed in flame
Racing on to where the mountains' foreheads loom
Through the gloom,

Or notice him at evening give the sea
His last fee,
Or his burnished, ruddy, golden, peaceful sheen
Tread the green,
While the wood with long and longer shadow bends
As he wends.

And my lips will never blow an oaten pipe,
Or the ripe
Glowing berries crush between them from the brake,
Where they make
Such a picture that the gods might know delight
At the sight.

For I've sat my life away with pen and rule
On a stool,
Totting little lines of figures, and so will,
Tho' the chill
And the languor of grey hairs upon my brow
Mocks me now.

And sometimes while I work I lift my eyes
To the skies,
To the foot or two of heaven which I trace
In the space
That a grimy window grudges to the spot
Where I tot.

And I ask the God who made me and the sun,
What I've done
To be buried in this dark and dreary cave
Like a grave,
While the world laughs in scorn now and then
At my pen.

Moving swiftly up and down the columned lines,
Lists of wines
And their prices, tho' the grape I never sip,
For my lip
Is divorced from that enjoyment as from those
That I'd choose.

But I'll sit and work my utmost and not budge,
 Tho' a grudge
Is ever growing in the bosom of a clod
 'Gainst the God
Who condemned him in his lifetime to grow fit
 For the pit.

TO THE FOUR COURTS, PLEASE

THE driver rubbed at his nettly chin
With a huge, loose forefinger, crooked and black,
And his wobbly, violet lips sucked in,
And puffed out again and hung down slack :
One fang shone through his lop-sided smile,
In his little pouched eye flickered years of guile.

And the horse, poor beast, it was ribbed and forked,
And its ears hung down, and its eyes were old,
And its knees were knuckly, and as we talked
It swung the stiff neck that could scarcely hold
Its big, skinny head up—then I stepped in,
And the driver climbed to his seat with a grin.

God help the horse and the driver too,
And the people and beasts who have never a friend,
For the driver easily might have been you,
And the horse be me by a different end.
And nobody knows how their days will cease
And the poor, when they're old, have little of peace.

TEIG GORABH AND THE LIAR

SHEPHERD piping in a dell,
Piping sweetly, piping well,
What is this strange tale you tell
 Softly to your pipe ?

Do you say the folk are seen
Dancing gaily on the green,
That the women come to glean
 Where the corn is ripe ?

Shepherd piping in a dell,
What is this strange tale you tell :
Is it one you heard in hell ?

Do you sing it, that a maid
Tripping lightly in the glade
Debonair and unafrāid,
 Fared to meet her boy ?

Do you tell they wooed and wed,
Lived and loved till they were dead,
Lying lightly head to head,
 Wearied out with *joy* ?

Shepherd, singing such a song,
Tho' your voice is sweet and strong,
You've been singing lies too long.

Shepherd, listen to my rune :
I can sing another tune ;
There is murder in the moon ;
Wan she is and white.

And the sun is hot with strife,
Every star is sure a knife
Levelled secretly at life
Deadly in the night.

Shepherd piping, I can tell,
For I know it fine and well,
What you learned to pipe in hell.

Shepherd piping, well I know
Why the world is wild with woe,
'Tis your master made it so

That he might be gay.

Piper, piping us a dream,
I will stand beside the stream
As you pipe, and I will scream
" Satan's at the play."

Shepherd, do you pipe of gold ?
Blood I'll scream is bought and sold,
So I'll scream till all are told.

They shall hear and understand ;
They shall hear me say and tell
That the coal you use in hell
Is the gold they love so well.
Piper, piping, help's at hand ;
Sing your sweetest, here I stand.

FOSSILS

AND then she saw me creeping,
Saw and stood
Transfixed upon the fringes of the wood,
And straight went leaping.

Headlong down the pitch
Of the curved hill,
Over the ditch
And through the skirt of bushes by the rill
She pelted screaming,
Swerved from the water sideways with a twist
Just as I clutched and missed.

Flashed white beneath my hand and doubled back,
Swift as a twisting hare upon her track,
Hot for the hill again,
But all in vain.

Her hair swung far behind,
Straight as a stream balanced upon the wind,
O, it was black, dipped
In the dregs of midnight with a spark
Caught from a star that smouldered in the dark.

It I gripped,
Drew for a moment tight,
Jerked with a victor's cry
Down in the grasses high
Her to the hot, brown earth and threatened—daft
And then she laughed.

THE SHELL

AND then I pressed the shell
Close to my ear
And listened well,
And straightway like a bell
Came low and clear
The slow, sad murmur of far distant seas,
Whipped by an icy breeze
Upon a shore
Wind-swept and desolate.
It was a sunless strand that never bore
The footprint of a man,
Nor felt the weight
Since time began
Of any human quality or stir
Save what the dreary winds and waves incur.
And in the hush of waters was the sound
Of pebbles rolling round,
For ever rolling with a hollow sound.
And bubbling sea-weeds as the waters go
Swish to and fro
Their long, cold tentacles of slimy grey.
There was no day,
Nor ever came a night
Setting the stars alight

To wonder at the moon:
Was twilight only and the frightened croon,
Smitten to whimpers, of the dreary wind
And waves that journeyed blind—
And then I loosed my ear—O, it was sweet
To hear a cart go jolting down the street.

WHAT THE TRAMP SAID

WHY should one live when living is a pain ?
I have not seen a flower had any scent,
Nor heard a bird sing once. The very rain
Seems dirty, and the clouds, all soiled and rent,
Toil sulkily across the black, old sky,
And all the weary stars go moping by,
They care not whither, sea, or mount, or plain,
All's one—and what one gets is never gain.

The sun scowled yesterday a weary while.
It used to beam. The moon last night was grim
With cynic gaze and frosty, sullen smile.
And once I loved to gaze while from the rim
Of some great mountain she would look and gild
The rustling cornfield. Now she is filled
With bitterness and rancour sour as bile,
And blasts the world's surface every mile.

There is no more sunlight : all the weary world
Seems steeped in shadow, and for evermore
The heavy clouds will press till I am hurled
Back to the heart of things. O, it is sore
And sad and sorry to be living : let me die
And rest while all eternity lolls by,
Where the fierce winds of God are closely furled
Ten million miles away from this damned world.

A STREET

Two narrow files of houses scowl,
Blackened with grime, on either side
Of the road, and through them prowl
Strange men and women, shifty-eyed
And slinking, and a drink-shop throws
Its flare of yellow light adown
The cracked pavement. The gutter flows
A turbid, evil stream. A clown,
Drink-sodden, lurches by and sings
Obscenely. A woman trails behind
With old, bad eyes ; her clothing clings
Rain-soaked about her. No daring wind,
Light-hearted, from a garden blows
Its sweetness here from any rose.

OPTIMIST

ALL ye that labour, every broken man
Bending beneath his load, each tired heart
That cannot quit its burden, all the clann,
Black-browed and fierce, who feel the woeful smart
Of fortune's lances, wayward, uncontrolled.
All ye who writhe in silence 'neath the sin
That no man knows about, and ye who sold
The freedom of your souls if ye might win
A moment's ease from strife, and hate the thing
That bought it, ye who droop, trembling with pain,
And hunger-haunted, lacking everything
That dignifies existence, and are fain
To lay ye down and die, hear the behest—
"All ye that labour, come to me, and rest."

Let ye be still, ye tortured ones, nor strive
Where striving's futile. Ye can ne'er attain
To lay your burdens down. All things alive
Must bear the woes of life, and if the pain
Be more than ye can bear, then ye must die.
That is the law, and bootless 'tis to seek
Far through the deeps of space, beyond the high
Pearl-tinted clouds, out where the moon doth peak
Her silver horns, for all that vastness bows
To an appointed toil, and weeps to find

Some kindly helper. Be ye patient, rouse
Your shoulders to the load to ye assigned,
And dree your weird ; be sure ye shall not moan
Stretched in the narrow bed beneath the stone.

Lo, we are mocked with fancies, and we stretch
Meek, unavailing arms to anywhere,
But help is none. The north wind cannot fetch
An answer to our cries, nor in the air
Fanned by the south wind's van is any aid.
What then is left, but this, that we be brave
And steadfast in our places, not afraid
However fell our lot, and we will lave
Us deep in human waters till our minds
Grow broad and kindly, and we haply steal
A paradise from Nature. Nothing binds
Man closer unto man than that he feel
The trouble of his comrade. So we grope
Through courage, truth, and kindness back to hope.

WHERE THE DEMONS GRIN

THE hill was low, but stretched away
A straggling mile or so to where
The sea was stamping, tossing spray
Beyond its bulwarks black and bare :
 A sullen sea of gray.

Ah me, it was so desolate,
And sadder for the sea-bird's cry
Thrillingly thin. There seemed a weight
Brooding, as if the leaden sky
 Hung heavier for hate.

The grasses jerked as they were stung
By vicious winds. A daisy's head
Crouched in a tuft till it was flung
From its uneasy, troubled bed
 And cast the waves among.

A bent, old man was climbing slow
With weary step and plodding pace
That savage hill, and wild did blow
A bitter wind in headlong race,
 Harsh from the sea below.

And all the woeful things he said—
Ah me, the twitching of his lips—
Of hungry children craving bread,
And fortune's sideward slips,
And how his wife was dead.

He held a rope, and as he trod,
Pressing against the furious wind,
He muttered low and sneered at God,
And said He sure was deaf or blind,
Or lazing on the sod.

.

And what was done I will not tell—
There is a bent tree on the top
Of that low hill, there you can see
The sequel of this mystery . . .
Beneath the moon . . . I dared not stop . . .
My God—a demon up from hell
Jab-jabbered as the old man fell.

SEUMAS BEG

A MAN was sitting underneath a tree
Outside the village, and he asked me what
Name was upon this place, and said that he
Was never here before. He told a lot
Of stories to me too. His nose was flat.
I asked him how it happened, and he said
The first mate of the Mary Ann done that
With a marling-spike one day, but he was dead,
And jolly good job too ; and he'd have gone
A long way to have killed him, and he had
A gold ring in one ear ; the other one
“Was bit off by a crocodile, bedad.”
That's what he said. He taught me how to chew.
He was a real nice man. He liked me too.

THE REBEL

I WANT to live, to grasp
With arms outspread, and feel
The thrill, the passion of my time,
To know the dream of every clime :
The goodness, badness, joy or weal,
All throbbing in my clasp.

I want to feel, to see,
To meet, to do, to know,
To live as deeply as I can,
To know the best or worst of man,
To meet the storm, the heat, the snow—
—But you say “you love me.”

You love me, how ? you come
To hoard me up and hide
Whatever I may have of bloom
Within a narrow little room,
While sweet the world outside
Sings on, and I sit dumb.

You sob you love me—What,
Must I desert my soul
Because you wish to kiss my lips
In guarded, careful little sips,
Measuring out your stingy dole
Of love ? I want a lot :

Much more than you can give
Or take. A year had seen
Us snapping, snarling, angry-eyed
Across a table three feet wide
And stellar space between
The places where we live.

You want a thing to cook,
To wash and scrub and smile,
To black your boots and brush your hat,
And kiss you good-bye on the mat,
Then darn your socks awhile,
Or con the butcher's book.

I must be I, not you,
That says the thing in brief.
I grew to this without your aid,
Can face the future unafraid,
Nor pine away with grief
Because I'm lonely. True

It is I love you, yet
I must be I, e'en tho' I fling
Your love away and call it knavery,
I cannot love if love be slavery.
I hear the free wind rush and sing.
Must I live in a net?

I want my life, you'd joy
To murder me with love.
You'd hide me in a room, your fist
Upon my breast, and now I'm kissed
Or cuffed, or thrown off like a glove.
. . . Well, take me then, poor boy.

No need to moan, I've said
The words that end the strife.
If bliss it is, then take your bliss;
You want—What? just another kiss,
Then here, and here, and here. O life,
Till this hour I've been dead.

OULD SNARLY GOB

THERE was a little fire in the grate
A fistful of red coal
Might warm a soul,
But scarce could heat a body that had weight—
Not mine, at any rate.

A glum old man was sitting by the fire,
With wrinkled brow,
Warming himself somehow,
And mumbling low, this melancholy sire,
A singular desire.

If I were young again, said he, if I
Were only young again,
I'd laugh at pain:
I'd jeer at people groaning, and I'd try
To pinch them ere they'd die.

The young folk laugh and jump about and play,
And I am old,
And grey, and cold;
If I were only young again, and they
Were old, and cold, and grey,
I'd pull them from the fire, I'd jeer and shout.
I'd say for fun,
Get up and run
And warm yourself, you lazy, doddering lout,
Get up and run about.

HOW TO WOO

I

SIR YOUTHFUL ANXIOUS

WHAT to do

When you woo,

Listen and I'll tell it you.

Deep humility must teach

That the star's beyond your reach,

Yet must courage raise your heart

To the conqueror's lofty part.

Not too forward, shyly bold.

Not too hot, but never cold.

Fearing still to tread too near,

Treading nigher, spite of fear.

Laying all your logic down

As you pick your manhood up,

Disbelieving every frown,

Intent always on the cup.

Hold her hand,

Hold her gaze,

Always stand

In her ways ;

Humbly kiss

Her finger-tip ;

She'll surrender

You her lip.

SIR STALWART HEAVY

What to do,
How to woo,
Here's some good advice for you.
Tell the maiden that you're strong,
Never let a weakness show ;
Say you're never in the wrong,
Never bent before a foe ;
Say you're in no need of help,
Never knew the face of fear,
Are sufficient to yourself,
Never shed a foolish tear.

Then, Sir Stalwart,
Sitting glum,
Glower round
And bite your thumb.

SIR SMILE THE NEIGHBOUR

What to do,
How to woo
Your friend's wife who trusts in you—
Make her think that you're in pain ;
Act on this undoubted rule ;
Stand an hour in the rain ;
Make her think that you're a fool.
Teach her dear and tender heart
For your agony to sigh ;
Play a foolish, loving part ;
Be embarrassed when she's by.
But your voice must never lend
Half a whisper 'gainst your friend
Who's her husband : here's the plan ;
Renunciation saves a man.

Then, you devil,
Slidder in,
You've done your level
Best to win.

WINDY CORNER

HERE and there along the street
The lamps are dimly burning,
And all is silent save the fleet
Footsteps of the winds that meet
To tattle at the turning.

Sleeping softly snug inside
Lie the people resting
Lip to cheek or side by side,
While I wander where the wide
Breezes go a-questing.

O, I can tell and I can know
What the wind rehearses :
“A poet loved a lady so,
Loved her well, and let her go
While he wrote his verses.

Here he met the maiden fair,
And here they parted madly,
Tho’ she’s wed, he still will wear
A shining, twining hoop of hair,
And sing about her sadly.”

That’s the tale the winds relate
Soon as night is shady.
If it’s true, I’ll simply state
A poet is a fool to rate
His art above his lady.

SLAN LEATH

(*To C.*)

*And now, dear heart, the night is closing in,
The lamps are not yet ready, and the gloom
Of this sad winter evening, and the din
The wind makes in the street fills all the room.
You have listened to my stories—Seumas Beg
Has finished the adventures of his youth,
And no more hopes to find a buried keg
Stuffed to the lid with silver. He, in truth,
And all alas, grew up; but he has found
The path to truer romance, and with you
May easily seek wonders. We are bound
Out to the storm of things, and all is new.
Give me your hand, so, keeping close to me,
Shut tight your eyes, step forward. . . . Where
are we?*

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